4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

The master starts with the explanation of the text after the student has finished memorizing it, and so it happens that, after some time, one pupil is studying a second or a third book, while the others are still studying the first one. It is hard to teach pupils who have not received the same ducational preparation and who progress at an unequal pace. The lack of elementary schools and high schools compels the master to adapt his teaching to the capacity and enthusiasm of each of the students, and inevitably the study loses its interest for pupil and master.

It is no wonder that very few learned lamas are encountered at present among the lamas of Huang-chung. The Living Buddha Goorong bzan, of the Red Sect, was the only man celebrated for his learning all over the country during the period 1910–1920, and he enjoyed this reputation among lamas of the Yellow Sect as well as the Red Sect. In Kumbum there was also a learned Living Buddha, Chao-hsi, who was said to have given instruction in the lamasery of Galdan in Tibet. In June, 1920, he was invited by the community of lamas of Kumbum to give instruction for ten days, and Kumbum seized this opportunity to invite all the lamas of Huang-chung to attend the ceremony, remembering that each attendant should offer a ceremonial scarf to the preacher, and bring his food with him. Kumbum, however, would offer two butter-teas to the participants each day. I was at Hua-yüan, a branch of Erh-ku-lung, at that time, and the intendant, in order to have his lamas attend the instruction, himself offered to provide them with the food for twelve days; but only 12 among the 58 lamas went to Kumbum.

In 1914 I was told that among the 3,000 lamas of Kumbum, 1,300 were members of the College of Philosophy, 350 of the College of Ritual, Magic and Astrology, 200 each in the College of Medicine and the College of Sacred Scripture and Monastic Rules. All these numbers have to be reduced according to the ratio previously noted for the 3,000 lamas of Kumbum, but the proportion is the same for the members attending the colleges. Thus, among the 3,000 lamas 2,000 or two-thirds were enjoying a higher educational training in the colleges, and they remained members of the colleges for the whole of their lives. This was generally true for all of the colleges of Huang-chung.

The reason for the unusual attendance at the colleges is not that these institutions are centers of higher education, but rather that they provide meals for their members. The richest colleges, able to give the greatest number and the choicest meals, are the best attended, such as the College of Philosophy. Another attraction of this very popular college, teaching the most arduous of all the sciences, is the relaxation provided by the public disputations. The schedule of the meals provided by the various colleges supports these statements: